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REPRINT

Lying, honor, and contradiction

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Sociological structures differ profoundly according to the measure of lying which operates in them.

– Georg Simmel

This essay focuses on the ways in which meaning emerges in the practical reality of the everyday world rather than on the formal construction of systems of classification and symbolism.[1] With a particular concentration on the manifold practices of what will be called "lying," I shall try to show the way in which individuals in a Lebanese village negotiate and transact about the most important area of value in any culture, social personality and the significance with which behavior is invested. I shall go on to argue that *kizb,* the Arabic word translated here as "lying," is a fundamental element not only of specific situations and individual actions, but of the cultural universe as a whole; and that further it is the product of, and produces in

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1. The work of Mary Douglas on purity and pollution of V. W. Turner on symbolism and of Cl. Lévi-Strauss on *la pensèe sauvage* and the structure of myth has a different focus. I would hope that the approach here complements their theoretical perspectives.

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turn, basic elements and contradictions in the social structure. Instead of proceeding by the study of taxonomic systems, I shall assume that tacit and explicit sets of meaning can be examined through everyday activity.

For Simmel the lie is chiefly significant because it "engenders by its very nature an error concerning the lying subject" (Simmel 1964: 312), and because it fundamentally affects the reciprocal knowledge which is at the root of all interaction. The lie is a technique for the restriction of the social distribution of knowledge over time, and is thus ultimately woven into the system of power and control in a society. How it informs certain kinds of social relations, and in what spheres, becomes for Simmel the major problem, and this leads into his famous discussion of secrecy.

His emphasis on the process of manipulation of meaning by the lying subject highlights the part lying plays in the constitution of the self. A lie by X about X is a classic instance of "creating the self," of purposely fashioning a social personality "out there" for one's own contemplation, of making an object of and to the subject for his own aesthetic self-regard. Knowing *what* he lies about in reference to himself and *how* he does so gives the key to the innermost realms of the individual. But lying in the everyday world is also a conscious act directed at another; it is always part of social meanings and social relations. Indeed, the lie is usually accessible to the observer, not in its original form in the actor's intention, but as a judgment made by others (or an other) of certain verbal or behavioral signs.[2] Lying often manifests itself to us socially as an attribution made by others to the actor of a specific intention, whether or not such an intention "in fact" existed. The modes and conditions of such attributions are sociologically as significant as the strategic, purposive use of lying by a subject. It is here, in the examination of the lie in action, that we learn the full meaning of the classification "that is a lie."[3]

Such judgments may be public and discrediting, or they may be privately made by the other who for some reason has no interest in revealing his judgment and is prepared to go along "as if" things are as they seem. There may be tacit cooperation and collaboration, or challenge and social compromise. Moreover, all the while others may be unsure, unable to answer the question whether such and such an act or statement is a lie or not, and they may turn to procedures for testing it when it is relevant that they do so. Such "monitoring" will depend on whether there is information, uniformly or selectively available, for verifying the individual's representation, or whether it is simply unverifiable and a matter of trust. Similarly, the lying subject may have difficulty in discovering if he is believed, and the nonlying subject in realizing that his conduct is labelled by some as a lie. Uncertainty as to the precise degree of lying or truth on both sides will always be present and subject to active assessment in problematic situations. For insofar as falseness undermines our notions of legitimate and right behavior, indeed the certainty of our grasp on the reality of the common-sense world, it constitutes a threat of a serious order to

2. I exclude of course situations in which the observer knows as a matter of fact that such and such a statement is untrue—for example, that X was not in his house when he claimed to have been.

3. "Lying" is to be understood in the rest of this essay in this double sense of intentional act and/or attributional judgment by others.

our social reality.[4] The conjunction or disjunction between appearance and reality, shifting and ever critical, is hedged with ambiguity concerning judgment and value, act and intention, what is concealed and what is revealed.

The concept of *Kizb*

The meanings and range of the word *kizb*[5] will emerge in the course of this essay. Precisely because it is a thematic and constantly used concept in the everyday world, it has a wide span of meaning and reference, and as manifested in behavior it may take a complex range and form. Children rush up to other children in the street and falsely announce the death of a famous singer;[6] a friend says he is going to a particular place and asks if he can do something for you, when in fact he will be somewhere else altogether; another has found 1,000 lire in a field, you can ask X and Y (carefully rehearsed) who were with him; and so on to infinity. Here the lie is simply a matter of tricking another, often by coordinated group effort, and demonstrating in a simple way an ability to fool him. The essence of it consists precisely in the liar's ultimately *revealing* the lie and claiming his victory: I'm lying to you, you ate it! In the laughter there is the sense of superiority, the fleeting dominance of A over B. There is the risk too that it will fall flat, or even backfire on the perpetrator with direct denunciation of the *kizb*. These little scenes are played out constantly by children and young men among themselves, though rarely in this form by socially fully mature males.

In this aspect *kizb* is associated with a rich inventiveness and imagination, a verbal quick-footedness and extemporaneous wit that have strong elements of public entertainment and play about them. Players are not necessarily called to account for the factual basis of their talk, providing that an appropriate setting of banter, camaraderie, and play has been established in interaction. Even so, though the young men may indulge in the (often competitive) verbal fantastic for its own sake, it does not accord with the weight and seriousness of anyone who claims a full social

4. See Goffman 1959 (58–70) for a discussion of misrepresentation in social performances and its threatening aspects.

5. Properly, in classical Arabic, it is *kidhb* defined in Wehr's Arabic dictionary as "lie; deceit, falsehood, untruth."

6. Hamid Ammar (1954: 138–39) describes deception and lying by children in an Egyptian village: among other children in games and in attempts to triumph by showing another's credulity; by the children to parents, because punishment is administered inconsistently and capriciously with no chance for the child to explain or justify his acts. About the latter type of lie Ammar writes: "the effects of these techniques of fear as forcing children to resort to lies and deception are reflected in the prevailing atmosphere of adult life which is charged with suspicion, secrecy and apprehension . . . it is not surprising to find the common saying that 'fear is a blissful thing.'" The connection here between lies and dominance and control, though it takes different forms in the Lebanon, is of the greatest importance for this discussion, not least with respect to the pervasiveness of lying and secrecy in interaction and at the broader level of culture and social relations.

"place," a "station." In such a case it would indicate a certain lightness and lack of self-respect, and a married man of, say, his middle thirties would risk becoming a joke himself if he told too many (a role, incidentally, which some, lacking prestige and social standing, settle for, thus capitalizing on verbal skills where more solid resources are lacking).[7]

This "artificial" quality of word play based on *kizb* brings us to two more general, complementary senses of the term that relate it specifically to judgments on the nature of the world. The first may be illustrated in the words of a taxi-driver friend, twenty-seven years old, married and known for his bravado, cockiness, and putting on the style, who had come back from a job driving people into Beirut for New Year's Eve. He returned from the capital to the quiet impoverishment of the village, and ecstatically rehearsed the extraordinary nature of the scene with vast enthusiasm.

> The streets were all hung in lights, decorations everywhere, people all over the road and pavements and filling the open-air cafés. The girls' dresses, heaven, the girls' dresses were up to here [graphic gestures]! There were Buicks. Alfas. Mercedes. Porsches, and Jaguars bumper to bumper.[8] People were kissing in the street, it was unbelievable, it would drive you mad, you can't imagine, it was . . . like *kizb* . . . absolutely . . . like *kizb*!

Here is a scene of glitter and artifice, style and fantasy; an ornate, baroque extravagance of wealth, display, and ornament, of gleaming chrome and glittering clothes, that goes beyond reality and is totally divorced from the everyday world of common experience—in short, like *kizb.* My notes are full of accounts of unusually vivid occurrences where people were all over the place, cars, bullets whizzing everywhere (seen in person, or on film or television), that in the end were characterized and summed up by the phrase "absolutely like *kizb*" *(shi mithl al kizb abadan).* Lying therefore is not to be understood only in terms of strategies and judgments in social relations, or as a technique for gaining or showing superiority. It possesses its own aesthetic of baroque invention and is part of a style, of a wide range of variations on the cultural theme of appearance and reality, and it is recognized at once for what it is.

Now the social world in its aspect as part of God's creation, and the Muslim community bound by His revealed imperatives, are part of Truth. Truth indeed is something "pre-eminently real, a living force which is operating in the very process of life and death in the world of existence."[9] But insofar as the world is the place

7. Pierre Bourdieu, writing of a Berber society in which honor and appearance are crucial, also notes the limitation on joking and verbal extravagance for the restrained and self-effacing man of honor (Bourdieu 1965: 210–11).

8. Nothing, save a rifle, is the object of more knowledge and discussion than the car. Why this is so will become clear later.

9. See Izutsu 1966: 98. This book gives a valuable account of the place of lying (*takdhib*) in the Quran, and a suggestive analysis of its semantic field. He points out that lying is the opposite of truth both as an objective property and as the subjective property of a particular speaker whose language conforms to reality (89).

of men's activity and a product of their own constructing without attention to its real underlying principles, it becomes the realm of the apparent, of what is vain and fraudulent. Though the Truth is present in the revelation of the Quran and the religious law, few men know the true, either of themselves, others, or the world. Or perhaps more accurately it should be said that the fact that Truth *is* accessible in Quran and Islamic teaching, could be known, and *yet* men spend their daily lives ignoring it, shows that they are not passively ignorant but actively liars. Moreover, lying is linked in the Revelation, as they well know, with ingratitude and hypocrisy, two other major and salient aspects of unbelief. Lying is thus a blasphemous act, the direct contradiction of the Truth, and the active opposite of the sacred. The sacred creates, its opposite destroys. These are not theological statements only, for they are used to characterize a world view by the villagers themselves, whose sense of the disjunction between apparent and real, born of a system of dominance in which status honor is critical, is very acute. *Kizb* is linked to endless reiteration of a world skepticism, and a pessimistic and detached sense of deception: "the world is a lie my friend, all of it's a lie" (*ad-dunya kizb ya' ammi, kullu kizb*). Why these elements of the Islamic cultural universe are selected rather than others, and why there exists the particular elective affinity of ideology and social group, can be understood by examining the operations of the lie in the widest and the most limited range of social relations.

Lords and staff in North Lebanon

The village in which I worked in North Lebanon was until the late 1960s one of the main centers of an old Bekawat family of Kurdish origin. It is still one of the most important rural foci of the family's interests in terms of olive groves and agriculture, even though most of the lords now live in the cities of Beirut and Tripoli, from where they have easy access to the village. Estimates of the number in the family reach as high as 5,000, and it is a family in name only. Different segments of it are the most significant local-based land-owning groups in the area, the only real material resource of which is land. Though they now live for the most part outside the villages, the family members dominate the political economy of the region almost as effectively as in the days when their horsemen exercised in the fields below their imposing, thick-walled palaces. Up to contemporary times, the "houses" of Muhammad Pasha and Mustafa Pasha ruled this land and much of the mountain and plain across what is now the border with Syria, and their influence and power are by no means dissipated, though the modalities are in the process of transformation.

Members of this stratum are bound by a constellation of interests founded on the direct monopoly of resources. In this situation we do not find a sanctifying tradition and legitimizing myth in the sense familiar to anthropologists. Rather, the historical charter is one of conquest and warrior leadership, backed originally by Ottoman appointment.[10] The ideology is one of status honor, hierarchy, and coercion expressed in an elaborate idiom of respect. ("We kiss their hands in spite

10. The Ottoman state ruled the region until the end of World War I.

of ourselves," said one peasant to me, *chasbin 'anna*, "whether we like it or not.") This type of domination is personal, domestic, and quasi-manorial, and is also a persistent system of political and judicial authority.

Under the Ottomans the lords were relatively independent of the central government. Powers of taxation and conscription were in their hands, as was control over the various exactions of produce, labor, and personal services which might with greater or lesser arbitrariness be claimed. They built up political connections with the notables of Syria and Mount Lebanon, and they have dominated all regional elections for the national assembly from the time elections were introduced under the French in the 1920s. Their estates were and are still sometimes of considerable size. The most important bey in the village, for example, possessed around 3,000 hectares of land on the plain, most of it in Syria, and passed back and forth with considerably more authority than the police or army of either government could command in the area. The common statement· "He had such and such a number of villages" is a reflection of a single and simple reality: land, houses, and, in many but not all cases, livestock and all the means of production were in the hands of the beys. Moreover, as I shall note later, the colonial period of the French mandate after the First World War strengthened their political and economic position considerably.

The linchpin of the system as far as the village setting is concerned, and the group on which I shall particularly focus, is what might be called in Weberian terms the staff—those persons who put themselves at the disposal of the ruling order as instruments for ensuring the obedience of, and the production of a surplus by, the peasants and laborers. In the village these persons claim to be of one family, let us call it Beit Ahmad, claim to be Circassian in origin (i.e., from outside, non-Arab peoples), and claim to have established themselves independently as small landowners and horsemen (in the full honorific sense of the term). Their services could not be demanded through contractual or customary right; these services could be obtained only by incorporating Beit Ahmad into the system of domainal rule in a position of privilege and status.

Beit Ahmad were important to the lords perhaps for two major reasons: first, the scale of the land holdings, at least in the case of the real men of power among the beys; and second, the size and nature of the ruled orders. To administer the one and control the other the population of the lords themselves, scattered among their villages of the plains and hills, was insufficient. The staff administered villages (indeed they still act as estate managers and bailiffs) and guarded the lands and honor of their lords against infringement by other lords or by truculent laborers.

Yet despite, or perhaps because of, their common stake in the system of domination, the relationship of lords and staff is marked by constant ambivalence. The former, often divided by the very fact that their monopoly of political and economic power concentrated the struggle and competition for that power among themselves, needed their henchmen against members of other lordly groupings. Therefore the lords might encourage the corporate, family nature of Beit Ahmad as a mobilizable force. But this was hazardous, since this corporate force founded on kinship and a shared sense of status and interest might on occasion be turned against a bey's house (and even drive it from the village when a direct infringement

of Beit Ahmad's privilege occurred).[11] And family links might prevent a henchman from protecting a lord against the "request" of the henchman's cousin for money. Ambiguities in the relationship are recognized privately on both sides, particularly among the young men of the staff. "We made them, not the other way round" is an often-heard statement which, if not totally accurate historically, nonetheless reflects the real sense in which the lords depend on the staff (or *aghawat,* the honorific term by which they are known). Most significantly, the lords have been able for various reasons to buy out much of the staff's own lands around the village, thereby separating the staff from the means of economic independence and administration.

Beit Ahmad are therefore a much more heterogeneous grouping than the local lords. Divided into four major segments with a genealogical charter going back only four generations, they are united less in deeds than in words.[12] Most of the older men were or are attached personally in some way to a bey's service, though some held on to enough land to be free of such ties. Their generation shares a keen sense of the interest of the ranking groups as opposed to the "peasants," though their lifestyles are in fact increasingly similar to those of the persons they regard as the lower strata.[13] They themselves were men of the horse and gun in the interwar period especially and before significant patterns of social change had really impinged on the region. These elders still feel part of a traditional political economy in which beys and aghas are in a symbiotic relationship and committed to the perpetuation of the structure of domination.

In the family as a whole some own a little land, or rent it on favorable terms from a bey; some rely entirely on the lords for employment as bodyguards or chauffeurs; some are mechanics, construction workers, and lorry drivers; others serve coffee and make water pipes for the lord's guests; some are not much more than casual agricultural laborers. Beit Ahmad's position as Beit Ahmad is riddled with contradictions, and I would argue that it is in this gray zone of contradiction that the lie comes into its own. For the family's internal politics are highly fragmented, a series of day-to-day alliances in the context of minute fluctuations of influence and standing. Where low income, limited resources, and irregular work restrict wealth and the opportunities for real autonomy yet men are firmly attached to status honor

11. There are instances of individual and group pressure on a lord arising from some clash of issue or personality, and one family of lords does appear to have been driven from the village some eighty years ago. Now acts of personal intimidation or extortion are by no means infrequent.

12. There are some fifty-six family households of Beit Ahmad in the village, most of them concentrated in the same area. The overall general pattern is for brothers as they marry to build rooms on their father's house and share a common courtyard, though as these rooms are added to they also become referred to as houses. I have reckoned them here as separate units. The basic pattern of agnatic compound households is still dominant, though some of the young men now save for long enough to build a separate house that does not share the courtyard of the father's house.

13. As will become clear, the term "peasant" has multiple meanings, mostly pejorative and referring to those of no social standing. The topic is briefly explored later in this chapter.

and hierarchy, personality becomes most critical and the social significance of the individual and his prestige the greatest resource.

This is all the more the case because Beit Ahmad are part of a political and economic system based on monopolistic control of major resources and status honor by ruling groups, a system which produces among the privileged strata a primary stress on what a man *is*, his own individuality, his unique "place" and reputation. You cannot be trained for it in any formal sense; it must be your own creation (providing, that is, that you have been born into the "right" family and station in the first place). Though being of Beit Ahmad and of a certain descent has external reference, what counts within the family is the purely personal standing which a brother's or father's reputation will not make for you. The older men, in whose days the horse and gun were the dominant symbols of chevalier culture and prestige, scorned the idea of work as alien to their ethic and their being. An *qabadi* (a real man) did not *work*—the concept was meaningless. He simply was. To be a lord's companion, to be a hunter, to praise the bey in elaborate courtesies, to be a horseman, to be the administrator of seven villages, was not work. That was left for peasants and had no place in the aristocratic code. You *are* so-and-so and what you can make that statement stand for by your own actions. You observe respect, hierarchy, and etiquette; you sit upright, or lean slightly forward, one hand on knee, legs uncrossed;[14] you walk deliberately and slowly; you speak in a voice that demands attention and that silences others, assertively, emphatically.

Such men, and some of their sons as well, were *murafiqin* (companions, bodyguards, followers) to the lords, a position in which their courage and their capacity to dominate others and deter opponents would in the nature of circumstances be tested. Their position as the *aghawat* could never be legitimated merely by sitting in a certain way and observing the niceties of style, though a lord might happily relax in Tripoli or Beirut with more concern for his inheritance than for his honor. Members of Beit Ahmad depend(ed) far more on day-to-day situations, encounters and performances of honor in which claims and challenges are always possible. The lords were at least in origin Ottoman appointees, men of government, noble rank, beys and pashas, part of the provincial politics of notables. Beit Ahmad has only what it can make of itself and is not able to command the range of alliances of the Bekawat or their economic base. The aghas are locally bound to a particular village and often individually bound to a particular bey. Their greatest deeds are usually on behalf of someone else and in response to someone else's wishes in the idiom of the heroic aesthetic.

Contrast this with Clifford Geertz's analysis of the descriptive taxonomies of a society in which the whole weight is on ritualized anonymity and what Geertz calls a "settled haze of ceremony."

> The anonymization of persons and the immobilization of time are thus but two sides of the same cultural process: the symbolic de-emphasis. in the everyday life of the Balinese, of the perception of fellow men as consociates. successors. or predecessors. in favor of the perception of them as contemporaries . . . [the] various symbolic orders of person-definition

14. People talk with some discrimination about X's way of sitting in the reception room and on public occasions and about general modes of sitting posture.

> conceal . . . [what] we call personality behind a dense screen of ready-made identities, iconic selves (Geertz 1966: 531).

In our case, in complete contrast, where "weight" and personal prestige are crucial, anonymity is equivalent to relegation to a kind of neutral zone in which personal liking may be present but one would say "he's a good man, poor fellow" with a shrug.[15] He who "has value" and is "not easy" must make claims to that value. Those who do not, or cannot do so, but go about their lives within a restricted sphere of their immediate family lose out at election time or when influence is sought and traded with some lord, as well as in the day-to-day rehearsals of self and place.

Anonymity is a judgment, even an attribution of social nonvaluation. Members of Beit Ahmad often demanded of me why I had been talking with such and such a one. The reply that I was asking him about his life history or descent would always produce roars of sardonic laughter. "*That* has a *sira* [a socially significant biography]? *That* has a *tarikh* [history]?"[16] Such comments are made of a "peasant" by definition, as it were. To say any man is a *fellah* is to locate him in a nonhonorific stratum, to stamp him with anonymity, to label him one for whom questions of prestige and status cannot arise. Why talk to a peasant? Derisory comments of the same order are also made about members of Beit Ahmad by other members, though never in my experience in front of nonmembers. "He has a *sira?* He has a descent? I told the bey yesterday that you were asking about his descent and he said: 'It's well known what his descent is. He's a dog and the son of a dog!' So much for his genealogy! His father had nothing and he has less. He's a liar *[kazzab],* just a liar."

Social status and patterns of *Kizb*

One does not hide, then, behind various classificatory masking devices as in Bali. Rather one steps forward, differentiates oneself, invites judgment, and strives to establish a significant social biography. It is something to be insisted on, to be claimed as unique, always potentially at issue in the everyday world because circumstances may at any time throw up a crisis in which the self will be challenged and defined. I once upbraided a friend from Beit Ahmad for what I regarded as ridiculous swagger and putting on the style. "Look," he replied, "here, if you don't *fannas* [show off] you are dead. You have to put it on to live here. You think my brother isn't a *fannas* because he never sits outside the shop and doesn't talk much and people in the family think he's weak and sickly? You should see him at the top of the village [where the "peasant" families live], he's the biggest *fannas* in the whole village, talking about how he'll organize these and those votes and who's going to

15. *Adami*, "a good man," is a term of moral approval but not of prestige. It relates to personal characteristics but not to social rank, save insofar as it is frequently followed by *miskin*, "poor chap."

16. The view from the other side I shall describe later when discussing notions of the self and secrecy in the village.

pass exams, etc., etc. Up there he makes himself the lord of the village. Watch him." I did, and it was true.[17]

Most important, these social-status performances take place for the most part before those with whom one is consociate.[18] It is their judgment, rather than that of outsiders or the "peasants," which is significant; it is with those who know one best that transactions over one's social self occur. They are of all people best equipped to monitor one's behavior, and they have the most knowledge of one's biographical situation and life history. In my experience there is a high degree of consensus on readings of individual character in our sense of the term, and on mechanical abilities or skills (e.g., motor repair). I never heard men "lie" on these topics—perhaps there were too many practical and objective tests available. The variation and flexibility and transactions occur with respect to one's social standing and the degree to which one "counts" in the everyday world. Your consociates share with you a childhood environment that emphasizes the importance of the fluctuations of individual prestige and a competitive idiom of social relations. Among the children patterns of joking and lying emerge over time between two or more in which one is *mistillim* (taken over) by the other(s); in which verbal ability to outmaneuver another is cultivated and an appreciative eye for the minutiae of personal and general style and strategy is developed. Onlookers would say *istillmu,* he "captured him," "got him in his hand," "got a hold over him." Idioms of superiority abound to describe the sparring between individuals that is conducted through boasting of oneself or one's father, through display and bravado, through deceiving another in *kizb: akalha* (he ate it, he was beaten), *mawwithu* (I killed him), *māt abadan* (he died).[19]

All the time the question of what lies behind this behavior is present. People ask "what does he mean by this, what does he intend?" (*shu biyiqsud*), "what's he after?" (*shu biddu*), "what's the goal?" (*shu al hadaf*), "what is his interest?" (*shu maslahtu*). Narratives about events are full of "I asked myself what he was really after." When the actor particularly wishes to communicate something to another without an ulterior motive and without deception there are very simple cue phrases: *'an jadd* (seriously), *bitsaddiq?* (will you believe me?), *ma mazah* (without joking), *wahyatak, wahyat abuk* (by your life, by your father's life).[20] Many accounts

17. Unable by physique and temperament to compete in the family, he wore his learning like a banner among the "peasants." No other member of Beit Ahmad, it might be noted, had ever reached his level of education.

18. I use the term "consociate," derived from Alfred Schutz's work, to mean those with whose personal biographies one is intimately linked and with whom one has grown up and/or is in daily face-to-face interaction; the community with whom one shares a history and stock of common knowledge about the world; and so on. (See Schutz 1962: 16–17).

19. The last phrase is applied to one to whom, under the guise of innocence and perhaps in collaboration with others, you have delivered a telling verbal blow or innuendo to which he cannot reply and which forces him involuntarily to *show* his hurt.

20. I once refused to believe that a friend had been shot and killed until the young men who rushed to my house swore *wahyatak*. These cue words are particularly important among the young men, who carry on so much joking in their relations that without sign phrases it would be difficult to indicate the boundary between the authentic/real

of confrontations or encounters include the question "how should I make myself out to be?" (literally, "how should I make/do my condition; how should I react and appear to him?"). So one often hears "I pretended that I had never heard of it" (*'amilt hali ma' indi khabr,* "had not information on the subject"). How one "makes oneself" and "having information" go together in lying and judging other's appearances. Even with consociates the field of interpretation is relatively open, incidents can be glossed in many different ways, and the shifting everyday character of practical experience gives plenty of scope for individual style and display.

There are other modes of display and performance: *mazah* (joking), *haki* (idle talk, empty words), and *tafnis* (showing off).[21] All are terms which characterize that world of invention, fantasy, humorous elaboration, artifice, and pretense indicated by the word *kizb;* all focus on display. *Khallina nfannas 'aleihum,* a man might say—"let's show off in front of them." And so he drives past at high speed, or cuts into a discussion with: "Politics? No one knows what I know about politics. I'm the lord of politics. I invented it." Another wants to borrow a particularly fine set of prayer beads from a friend so that he can walk through the village with it for a few days, ostentatiously flicking it through his fingers in front of everyone. It is all show.

Such are the idioms and styles which men manipulate and in which they work the variations in constituting a social self. The lie occurs throughout as a leitmotif in a constant interaction of judgment on the apparent and the real, what is and what seems. But what happens when the self becomes problematic in a radical way, quite beyond the everyday momentary interchange, so that it is critically threatened or threatens others? What constitutes such a crisis and how is it handled? In the next section I will discuss a series of events or sustained processes of action which demonstrate how crisis and the actors involved are defined, and the different collective and individual strategies that are adopted.

Honor and the definition of Makhlu'

It is characteristic of the principles of this social world to be what I would call highly visible. The basis of politics, the armature of domination, is exposed rather than masked.[22] At least at the general level the code of honorable male social conduct and values is equally articulated and "on the surface." Similarly, status is negotiated in behavior that emphasizes visibility and making claims in the public domain

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and the inauthentic/invented-apparent. These cues establish a different domain of relevance and reference. I never heard them used otherwise (to my knowledge!).

21. A distinguished Lebanese scholar suggested to me that *fannas* as a Lebanese colloquial Arabic verb and the noun *tafnis* come from the French *finesse*. The etymology is certainly plausible, not to say appropriate.

22. As Bottomore puts it: "Neither the slave nor the serf can be in any doubt that he works in whole or in part for the benefit of another man" (in Mészáros 1971: 51). It is quite clear in this society who is dominating whom, particularly at the lords' and peasants' levels. Perhaps the middle is more uncertain and ambiguous.

about one's acts and biography. The status honor ethic sets the terms of relevance and provides what I shall call situations of ultimate reference within which and in the light of which men transact their socially significant selves. These ultimate situations are familiar from practical experience.[23] When they occur, or more precisely, when they are defined as having occurred, loss of face or even social degradation is threatened.[24]

Once an act or series of events is defined as radically undermining the whole social ground of an individual or group, the responses become increasingly limited and prescribed on a kind of all-or-nothing basis. The question is how we reach that point. Such definition takes place over intervals of varying spans; the situation *becomes* critical as certain options are closed off or fail, as their failure narrows the alternative viable and socially reasonable definitions. In other cases the precipitating circumstances may be defined *by their very nature* as critical, as in a public killing or direct challenge. But for a killing the relevant time span may be open-ended, and the response may remain merely "potential" for years.[25] For a face-to-face insult or blow, instant retaliation may be demanded, at least when an audience whose judgment is significant for the one challenged is present. Either the test is met at some proper point, or the individual is socially compromised, devalued in some degree, or even, in extreme circumstances, destroyed as a moral and social being. But even here the successful maintenance or degradation of self takes place as a process of definition over time, and in this process interest and strategies such as the lie are vital. It rarely involves a denunciation of an accuser by a perpetrator, but it becomes defined as socially visible at the terminal point of crisis, when room for maneuver and redefinition has vanished and persons can no longer agree on procedures for defining what has happened, or keep it socially invisible.[26]

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23. These situations include, for example, infringements on family sexual honor (*sharaf*), which desecrate the family; and attacks on individual honor (*karama*), such as serious insults or armed confrontation, or the murder of a relative, when a man may be thought by others to be a coward or timid.

24. The term "social degradation" is Harold Garfinkel's (1956). The main difference between our approaches is that he proposes a framework for analyzing how a specific ceremony of social degradation takes place, succeeds or fails. Rather than with direct confrontation, I am concerned here with degradation as emerging or becoming potential through processes of definition and transaction.

25. One man I knew was walking down the street in town with a distant relative when the latter suddenly indicated an old man walking ahead of them and said that that was the man who forty years ago had shot my friend's paternal uncle. My friend drew his revolver and killed the old man on the spot. What motivated the relative I do not know. The point is that he forced a definition of the situation on my friend, who had to recognize that his total social identity was at issue. His identity would be degraded if he did not maintain it by wiping out the old blood debt. He was jailed but is now free again, and is himself a potential victim.

26. The little boy may cry "The Emperor has no clothes"; the question is whether anyone will pay attention.

The disruptive nature of the demands of honor is only too real in men's experience.[27] To define a situation publicly in terms of honor and to have that definition endorsed as socially authentic by the relevant performers rules out alternative choices to a large extent and entails serious risk and disruption. Within Beit Ahmad, therefore, much effort goes into preventing an event's being categorized in these ultimate terms. Any one of the family who insists on such definitions and who presses every fine point of personal honor produces a kind of social *reductio ad absurdum,* pushing the code into chaos. Individualism and fearlessness then threaten the social value of others in the family by making what should be socially masked and invisible, public and visible. How can a counter definition be achieved? Such persons, ever likely to see an insult or a slight and ready to go for a gun, are "anonymized," despite their emphatic egoism. They are defined in such a way that their conduct, however provocative, does not demand a response, causes no infringement on another's place, but in fact socially validates that other's nonresponse. Such men are *makhlu',* reckless, mad, asocial, dislocated.[28] Their talk and conduct can therefore be received without reaction, and no social devaluation is suffered. The shame, indeed, lies in making a response or setting them off. Their individuality is neutralized by tacit social collaboration and classification.

One of the two men classified by this term in Beit Ahmad had in fact killed a member of a *fellah* family because the latter had wounded a cousin in a fight. The seventeen-year-old went up the hill a few days after to the *fellah* quarter of the village and fired six bullets into the offender. He ran out of the shop in which the shooting had occurred and was halfway down the hill when he realized he had left his sandals in the shop in his haste. He returned through the crowd *of fellahin,* gun in hand, and then walked slowly down the long hill with his back to them. Members of Beit Ahmad fired off their rifles in acclamation and a senior man (brother of the wounded cousin) shouted to him: "You went up the hill a boy and came down a man!" He was jailed for seven years and since his return has been regarded as *makhlu'.* (By the complex dialectic of self and others his behavior is in fact of this type. It is said that he was always fearless but that since his sentence he has become unstable and *makhlu'*.) While I was there he was shot and robbed by an excolleague in a gang from outside the village. The family's only concern in the internal meetings which followed was whether one of the other families of the village had done it. Had it been so, there would have been little choice but to continue the cycle of revenge, since his being *makhlu'* defined him as socially anonymous within the defining group but not vis-à-vis outsiders, to whom he remained "visible" and a member of Beit Ahmad.

27. In a killing, for example, time is open-ended, and even when blood money is paid the exchange remains ambiguous. Though there is Quranic and traditional warrant for blood price, the convertibility of blood to money is problematic: "a brother is not sold," and who knows what member of the victim's family may take it on himself, or be egged on, to seize an opportunity for revenge years later? The open-ended time span gives the situation flexibility from the revengers' point of view and allows for the maintenance of self without compromise. But it generates its own uncertainties.

28. From a verb root meaning to renounce, cast off, disown, repudiate, depose, have done with (see Wehr's Arabic dictionary).

The second case hinges on the process of individualizing rather than on anonymizing. A member of Beit Ahmad, also now said to have been known before his death as *makhlu'* and famous for a whole series of robberies and extortions (from the lords and outside the village), was killed by another member of the family. The murdered man's father, an elder of high prestige, defined his son as *makhlu'*. The boy had been violent-tempered, an outlaw, reckless and unfearing. He had persistently sought to get 10,000 lire from the great lord of the village, and it was because of this that his cousin, who was the lord's bodyguard, had finally shot him in ambush. The father insisted that it was not "a killing that called for revenge," that his son was fundamentally asocial and that therefore revenge would be "out of order."[29] Peace should and must be made.

The victim had two brothers. In terms of the code, as long as a brother is unavenged one is, in a basic sense, in a state of social pollution. No one expects immediate revenge, but the situation of ultimate reference has occurred. Now here the killing is within the family, the victim is defined as *makhlu',* peace has been made, and there is a collective interest in maintaining it.[30] And yet. . . . How the two brothers cope with this situation is important. The elder always carries a gun very openly and is treated with great courtesy and etiquette of social "place"; much complimentary phrasing is directed to him by the young men, his peers, and the elders. He sits at the shop where members of Beit Ahmad often gather, goes on deputations to ask favors from local leaders, is full of the verbal performances of honor, and behaves very much like the man of position he is treated as. The younger brother, an army corporal who is seldom in the village, is quiet and much respected as a man of character. It is of him that men say the killer is frightened: "Why? Because he says nothing and silence frightens.[31] The other's a liar [i.e., the other brother]. That's our family for you, we're all *kazzabin* and there isn't one who is worth a franc." These

29. However critical a circumstance killing may be, it is still of course subject to processes of social definition and transaction.

30. In one small family of the village that has no significant collective interest or collective social identity, there have been four murders of close relatives since 1935. The latest killer is in jail, and the one on whom the new duty of revenge falls is now of such an age that he is said to be waiting for the other's release. The grim cycle is expected to continue. There is no conflicted definition by which to restructure the situation so that peace may be made. Everything is visible, and each event has generated a new momentum. One man I knew well had one brother killed, and the other is the one currently in jail for seeking revenge.

31. Silence is of all signs the one regarded as most indicative of full intention. It was often said to me of different individuals that they would not do anything about an event, just produce a a lot of talk and threatening while friends rushed forward and pleaded and restrained. It is the one who makes no fuss of protest who is really *nawi shi*, intending something, and who may take revenge. That is when the offender keeps to his house or even leaves the village. The public declaration of sacred intention used on occasions of death or wounding is growing the beard, which is also a claim on other support in a sacred duty of revenge. As an act of self-degradation it places the person in the category of polluted until "right" in blood has been taken. It is an insistence on a very specific and narrow definition of the situation.

remarks, which could be made publicly within the family only at the cost of confrontation, were kept for an outsider.[32]

In these cases the category of *makhlu'* has been used to devalue a social personality within the family. On the one hand the actor's capacity for forcing the issue is neutralized. His behavior is defined as not requiring action in terms of the scheme of ultimate reference, which is the criterion he constantly and threateningly invokes. On the other hand, where the *victim* is classified as *makhlu'* (and is now said to have been so regarded before the killing occurred, which may or may not be accurate), his death is defined as one for which revenge is "out of order." He does not count. Yet ambiguity remains, and members cooperate to maintain and vigorously enact appropriate definitions of the relevant persons placed in this situation of ambiguity; men interact with them in the everyday world as full social, moral personalities. In both cases, the definition as *makhlu'* was operative within the family only. In the second case, had the victim been killed by a villager from outside the family, a very different course would probably have been followed. For then the social position of Beit Ahmad as a whole, and its claim to corporate status honor, would have been radically challenged.

Coping with the loss of honor

How does one who has in fact lost out in the competition for prestige and regard cope with his devalued situation when the code retains its social power and importance for him? The speaker who commented sourly on the family being worth no more than a franc is a man who had sold his inherited land and had been prodigal in spending money on his friends until the money, and the friends, ran out. He had gone abroad following a local altercation and on his return drifted around, finishing up as an impoverished *marafiq*/servant at a lord's house and as an outlaw. Apart from the memory of his father, who had been a celebrated hero of Beit Ahmad, he has no weight or prestige and is regarded as something of a joker (which indeed he is, or has become). He is on the fringe of the family in terms of social significance. He constantly attacked what he called the *kizb* of Beit Ahmad to me,[33] and his definition and use of lying from our third case.

32. It is noteworthy that the brother of the man killed in the shop (the case discussed earlier) also makes much of carrying a gun and a staff, talks very emphatically, and is a very "public" personality in his own quarter of the village. Beit Ahmad describe him in the main as "a good man, poor fellow." The killer "respects" (avoids) the quarter altogether.

33. For example, when the young man defined as *makhlu'* in the first case described earlier insulted someone of the family who did not reply, this man used to turn to me on the quiet and tell me that when it came to a crunch all the family's bravado and status honor were lies and show: "When this fellow goes for them, then it's mouths closed and eyes down and not a sound. Liars!" He is also, ironically, something of an expert on points of honor, the subtleties of the code, and proper behavior. He invokes the Bedouin heroes as "real men," can quote much classical Arabic poetry concerning them, and is a stringent and sarcastic judge of others' actions.

What follows is direct from notes, and I have interpolated relevant additional information in brackets.

> I had a row with Muhammad [a distant relative] in the shop. He insulted me, and I didn't return the insult because he's always drunk. A fight started and he called out Mustafa [another relative], "my brother," and Mustafa came and clouted me with his staff on the head. I grabbed the staff and then he got me with a spanner as well. People finally separated us; you should have heard the screaming and shouting. I went off to my quarter of the village to those who are most closely related, and they wouldn't do anything or go near it. My cousin even greeted Muhammad the next day!
>
> So I let my beard grow and said I wouldn't go into the village but would sell all I had. Everyone thought, "By heaven, he's going to kill someone." Up came several of the men saying that they'd bring Muhammad to kiss my hand in atonement. So I said I wouldn't have anything to do with them. But I knew what was going on and my heart was really happy. All the senior men came [and he proudly listed them] and Muhammad swore he meant nothing by it and there was much performance of respect behavior and he kissed my hand, etc., etc. They begged me to shave my beard, we ceremonially smoked a water pipe and drank coffee together, and off they went. But I knew I was all alone.
>
> No, I wanted to make a road for Muhammad on which he would die while he was still alive [i.e., force him to endure his own social death]. So I set out to become big friends with him. We drank arak together and became the best of friends. One day he came to me and said there's a bit of thieving we could do, so we did a few jobs in that line.
>
> Then one of the young lords I now work for came to me and suggested a theft at the expense of another section of the *behavat*. So I said to myself. "Here's the chance." The boy gave me 150 lire and I went off to Muhammad and told him that they wanted us to burn the house and had given 150 each, and put the money straight into his hand. At night off he went. and I stood fifty yards off with a rifle while Muhammad stole the stuff. Muhammad fled, because he was already wanted for causing a car accident some months before and for robbery. I stayed in the village and they arrested me, though the family told me to run.
>
> So I told them that Muhammad had set up the whole thing, because I knew the lords would get me off with a year or so and pay me no money in jail. I got out on bail before sentence after seven months and the senior men brought Muhammad and me together. I said that I had been beaten up, so what could I do but talk? And within a few days we were close friends again. The village went crazy when they saw us together again.
>
> At the trial Muhammad was sentenced *in absentia* to fifteen years, and I to ten, but I wasn't bothered because I knew the lord could fix it.[34] That's Muhammad settled. I've finished off his children's future as well. But I keep up a show of friendship and sincerity. Yet in my heart, that's

34. In fact our friend jumped bail on the lord's advice and was sentenced to ten years in jail. He is now an outlaw and even more dependent on the lord, whose level of trickery exceeds his own. He does not sleep in his own house any more than does Muhammad, though he lives perpetually in the hope that the lord will arrange clemency for him. The young lord involved came out of jail after a few months.

> another thing. Now he's an outlaw and has no way out. That's what I call real vengeance. If he surrenders and goes to jail the kids will die of hunger. *Rujula* [manliness] does not lie in clouting someone who has clouted you [referring to his nonresponse to the blow in the first quarrel]; that is merely self defense. Look at the family. They're all my relatives, though I have no paternal uncle or brothers [closest in cases of honor]. I did the whole thing myself, and it all started from a blow with a staff. The rest of the family just fight and have no respect for themselves—all noise and *kizb.* That's the way of the village. Real manliness is destroying your enemy without all the talk and lies, doing it in secret.

Here is a man who is faced with the fact that his social biography, formed by others' judgments and his changing life situation, has become devalued over time. His father is cited as the acme of courage and honor while he, now married and of an age when men claim full social status, is virtually a servant and unable to mobilize support when threatened with a crisis. As a teenager he sold the olive groves of his inheritance and threw away the money in reckless generosity. Such generosity at that age gains him no social place, since teenagers are still dependent and not full members of the group; he also has no brothers or paternal uncles. Left with nothing, and publicly without position, he has constructed a valued self "that no one knows" which he defines as his *real* self. This self is constituted out of a manipulation of what is secret, not by a public performance of place-claiming, for this is denied him by his social biography and the monitoring of his consociates. Everything that passes for etiquette, respect, manliness, and so forth is for him interpreted as "all *kizb*." It is not that he pretends to the superiority of a different code of honor. Quite the contrary: in his perspective it is he who has the greater sense of what the code of honor *really* is, since he understands just how far the talk and bravado of appearance is from the reality. Reality is concealed; therefore his conduct is in the same mode of concealment. The lie which destroys—pretense of friendship based on a full intention and not mere empty form—is for him true manliness.

His self is founded not merely on something not revealed, but on something hidden deliberately, on the secret as a stratagem of aggression. It is a product of his manipulation of the lie to destroy another.[35] (Muhammad is indeed spoken of as "dead," *meyyit,* in the family.) But at the same time that the secret is his weapon and as it were frames his sense of personal distinctiveness, he has been *forced* into secrecy. He still has no way to status and social significance in his public biography. He cannot make claims on the basis of his view of the code, since that would involve a radical criticism of the dominant interpretation of others, and his strategies could lead to complete disgrace if made public as intentional acts. He cannot even say "I have a secret," and indulge in the hint of superiority and guarded knowledge. He has constructed a private rationalizing ideology, based on what he sees as the

35. Simmel's (1964: 334–35) discussion of secrecy and individualization is of considerable relevance here: "The measure in which the dispositions and complications of personalities form secrets depends . . . on the social structure in which their lives are placed . . . the secret is a first-rate element of individualization . . . social conditions of strong personal differentiation permit and *require* [my emphasis] secrecy in a high degree; and conversely, the secret embodies and intensifies such differentiation."

contradiction between others' codified standards of honor and their actual practice. The real contradiction, however, is found in his attempt to create and legitimate his social biography by those same criteria of significance by which his social status will, in fact, be judged marginal and insignificant. Given the terms of the code, which he himself accepts and is forced by the system to accept, the contradiction can only be mediated by concealment and the lie. As Simmel (1964: 310) has put it: "We may think . . . of the *'lebenslüge'* (the 'vital lie') of the individual who is so often in need of deceiving himself in regard to his capacities, even in regard to his feelings, and who cannot do without superstition about gods and men, in order to maintain his life and his potentialities." Out of such a contradiction, generated in a specific set of social relations and meanings, is born an ideology, a "superstition" about self and others, at once individual and social, secret and public; an ideology which inevitably reflects the contradictions that generated and maintain it, and of which it has itself become an active element.

Infringement of sexual honor poses similar crucial problems for the man who lacks social status and social support. One individual of Beit Ahmad, on his return from working abroad, gathered enough by intuition or hints to know that his wife might have been illicitly involved with another member of the family. This latter is a highly regarded and very forceful, assertive personality of almost the classic type. The situation was loaded, the choices limited and largely in the returning husband's hands, though they depended also on the anticipation of likely collaboration and behavior. To acknowledge infidelity would be desecration of his total social self unless he killed the wife and challenged the alleged offender. The latter is a member of a large family of brothers and his nearest male kin are from a numerous segment of the family. Either way the husband's existence within the family would have become impossible, though he could have simply left the village altogether and his social world with it. He chose instead to make a point of going regularly to the house of the supposed seducer, going around with him, praising him publicly, and acting the part of the friend and companion with enthusiasm. To my knowledge other family members extended the same collaboration as in our second case, and the matter never reached any form of public doubt. The husband and wife are treated "as though nothing has happened." However, one day a relative who had a grudge against the husband, when drunk and complaining to me about our subject's behavior over some matter, went on: "Why does he do this to me of all people? When he came back from abroad it was I who told him there was absolutely nothing to the talk about his wife and X. I pushed him off to X's house, told him nothing had happened, and supported him." I interpreted this as a way of assuring me that the husband's status was in fact compromised and his honor destroyed; as a way also, under the guise of showing how great a friend he had been to the other, of making sure that I knew of the affair. Two of the younger men of the family who were with me, both close friends, said not a word and I joined their tacit pretense that nothing had been said or heard by making no reply or sign of reaction, though I was in fact shocked by this breach of collective performance. No one mentioned the outburst after we had left the relative's house; we continued the vital lie of "as if" and avoided the definition of the situation that our host had almost thrust upon us.

In a less dramatic setting, many of the younger men and those who had no social place also treasured the notion of the secret self hidden from the public gaze,

unknown by all yet knowing all. The secret and the sense of knowing others' secrets are the two sides of this complex process of individuation of the self in a society where you as an individual personality are at issue, when for various reasons you may not "count." Time and again, words to this effect would be said: "Look, you are here to write a book. Ah, if you knew about my life you could write three books or make a film! No one knows my life. But I keep a diary and write everything in it. I don't say anything, but I *know.*" One man, asked to tell about his life history, said: "I used to be a bodyguard for such and such a bey and now I drive the car to transport laborers morning and evening." After my suggestion that there might be more to his life than that, he suddenly added: "Oh, you want to know my *real* life, the truth. That would take days to tell. If you knew all my life you would never stop writing. No one knows me."

Now the point is not that this sense of self refers to what is "in fact" the ultimate individual reality. We should note rather that, for many, only this form of giving significance and uniqueness to the individual biography is available. The sole expression of the secret may be in a diary and in the satisfaction of *really* knowing what one's self is, while the world sees only the appearances of a bodyguard and taxi driver. The world of interpretations is devalued, the self exalted. At the same time, the fact that the mode in which the self is exalted is one of secrecy bears witness to the public, pervasive dominance of the code of status honor. Only in the sanctuary of the private domain is the self free from running the gauntlet that public claims or definitions must face—the possibilities of challenge, of circumstances arising which reveal that what one claims for oneself is unfounded or *kizb*, the revelation of a gap between appearance and reality as others judge it. Our final illustration will be of a situation, very precisely bounded in space and time, in which claims were made and falsified without the claimant being aware of the true extent of the disaster.

A religious case: A liar as the instrument of truth

There is one social identity in which the relation of the hidden and the revealed is particularly important, and that is the role of the religious specialist. Perhaps *the* type case of the basis of authority in most societies is one concerning the control of significant knowledge. The questions are: what constitutes this knowledge (i.e., the culturally recognized components)? How is it constituted in practice in social situations? And how is access to it governed or achieved? Claims to such access have to be authenticated and given warranty by signs which other members accept as valid.

"Knowledge" in Islamic teaching, and in the everyday world of the village, falls into two major categories, *'ilm* and *ma'rifa.* The first is essentially the knowledge of the religious sciences, such as is acquired by *training* in one of the religious colleges, and by familiarity with the Quran and theological texts. *'Ilm* is, as it were, external, existing independently of any individual. To become a specialist one goes through a formal process of passing examinations in a religious college and graduates as an *'alim. Ma'rifa,* however, might be crudely defined as knowledge which derives from illumination, or knowledge of God's concealed purposes, of the *batin* which

lies behind the apparent world or *zahir*. *Ma'rifa* is an internal quality of a person, recognized by specific culturally authenticated signs and performances.[36]

An identity as *sheikh* (as a man with *ma'rifa* is called) must therefore be attributed to the individual by others on a different basis from that of *'alim*. If he is to achieve authentication he must be credited with illumination, with knowledge of the *secret*, of the concealed *batin*.[37] The problem is how men come to credit the subject with knowledge of what by definition is hidden from them. How do *they* dress the individual in the mantle of holiness, award him sanctity—or, to put it another way, make his miracles for him? How do they grant holiness to or withhold it from those who claim it, and in what terms may it be claimed or demonstrated?

One evening a *sheikh* from Syria and one of his followers appeared in the village and went to the reception room of the *ra'is belediya* (the mayor) for their right of hospitality. It happened that another *sheikh* who is well known to this section of the family and often visits it was also present, and it was decided to hold *azikr* (ritual of chanting the names of God in unison) with the guests. The room was crowded, mostly with young men of Beit Ahmad, but with some senior men as well. Our *sheikh* opened the ritual as we all sat around the room by asking the local singer to sing some of the hymns in praise of the Prophet Muhammad. The singer has what are commonly regarded as a beautiful voice and phrasing. He began, and the audience shouted out with pleasure at certain finely sung phrases, rocked back and forth, and sang the refrains. Our *sheikh* began to murmur prayers, until his face screwed up in an expression almost of pain and he began to weep copiously, occasionally giving a huge shout of "Allah" and shuddering violently. In this sea of movement the Syrian *sheikh* sat motionless and evinced no particular reaction. The singer stopped, and the guest's follower was invited to take his turn.

As soon as he did so, the visiting *sheikh* was seized with convulsions of the right shoulder and an agonized weeping. His murmurs of ecstasy continued throughout the singing. When it ended everyone stood in the crowded room for the *zikr* proper. Our *sheikh* led the proceedings until the visitor interrupted him to change the form and tempo of the chanting and movement. He substituted a far more rapid

36. I must add here a further gloss, though there is no space in which to develop the point as it deserves. This division of the world has enormous resonance in the village *Weltanschauung*, and is often referred to in discussions of religion, the meaning of Islam, and men's place in the world. People often gloss the *zāhir* (apparent) as *kizb* and the *bātin* (concealed, inward meaning) as truth. He who has knowledge of the *bātin* is *mabrūk* (blessed), one of sacred status. But on the other hand he who has knowledge of the secrets of the everyday world, and can manipulate others because of his cunning, deceit, and *kizb*, is spoken of as *mal'ūn* (literally, cursed). This too is insight into the hidden, but of men's, not God's, purposes. Such understanding and manipulation through penetration into others' *kizb*, as I have already pointed out, the man best able to know others' lies is in a powerful and dangerous position. Futhermore, given the nature of things, one meets up with the *mal'ūn* a great deal more than with the *mabrūk* and he has far more daily, practical relevance.

37. It might be properly called *the* secret, since the *batin* of God's purpose is of illimitable range and significance. It is the ground of all that is hidden and all that is revealed. Its signs are the verses of the Divine Revelation.

and complex rhythm and swirled round, darting at different points in the circle with great violence and much shouting of the names of God. One boy of about ten collapsed, jerking and moaning; the mayor himself jumped up and down shouting and twitching, and rounded furiously on those who tried to restrain him; and the ritual eventually collapsed in chaos because the performers could not follow the visitor's conducting. After a short rest and a sermon on religious values, our *sheikh* left the room.

The visitor then started a long speech to the effect that our *sheikh* was now an old man and not up to the task of leading and teaching the young men. Were it not for him (the guest) there would have been no *zikr.* People should follow his way and take the path to him as members of his *tariqa* (religious fellowship). At this point one man stepped forward with an expression of immense piety and asked to take the oath. This caused suppressed amusement and exchanged glances, since he is one of the most disreputable members of the family, known for the very opposite of piety and for being a great joker and liar. The visitor instructed him to go off and make the ritual ablutions and then to pray the prescribed prayers of prostration twice. He disappeared into the next room and we heard a series of pious ejaculations. Meanwhile the guest enlarged on how he had knowledge of the *batin* and could see into the heart of a man, where others saw only the *zahir* of appearances. He was asked his opinion of the would-be disciple and he replied that as soon as he had seen him he had known that he was ready for admission to his fellowship. But should there not be some investigation first? "Nonsense," he said. "If he has committed any sins or has not prayed and fasted, he will do so after taking the oath, whether he likes it or not" (in other words, he would be compelled by his new *sheik*'s power). The acolyte returned and went through the oath ceremony and was exhorted to bring many new members for the fellowship. The *sheikh* then told many stories of his miracles. He also explained that his violent shuddering during the chanting was because the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad had descended on him, while the waving of his arms was to clear away the evil spirits.

The "disciple," as soon as his master had left to sleep, exploded with laughter and said that all the pious ejaculations we had heard from the next room were between mouthfuls of food; that he had not ritually washed, just splashed water over his head and hands; moreover, that he was not even in a state of ritual purity (meaning he had had sexual intercourse with his wife that day and not carried out the prescribed ablutions afterwards). This liar, meaning the guest, had not even known that; it was a blessing our *sheikh* had gone off to sleep for he always knew (and he cited examples of other *sheikhs* who had this power of insight into the hidden). The visitor left the next day without succeeding in gathering any money from those he approached.

Here the lie was used to unmask the claims of an individual to a specific social identity and to attribute to him the opposite of those socially valued powers of which he gave all the signs. How was it done? We should note that the visitor came as a stranger. He was not in his own community, where knowledge of his biography might have worked against or for him. He presented all the repertory of signs and behavior referring to and demonstrating religious power. He wore a beard, the green-banded turban, and long flowing outer garment, all assumed only by *sheikhs;* moreover, he appealed to the shared symbols and interpretations of the

religious province of meaning. But at the crucial point of *knowing,* of discerning the apparent from the true, he was discredited. His stranger status, far from being an advantage, became a handicap, since it meant that he lacked knowledge of the life histories and personalities of those to whom the claims were made, although those claims had to be authenticated by means of such knowledge. Had he *not* spoken of the age of our *sheikh* and his own superiority as teacher and ritual specialist, and gone on to attribute miracles to himself, such a discrediting would not have taken place. As it was, he made the members' own biographies relevant, without himself having access to them. Of all men a *sheikh* deserves close monitoring, for "any fool can grow a beard," and this above all others is the identity in which appearance and reality must be socially accepted as one. The *mabruk* may tum out to be the *mal' un.*

Our own *sheikh* had been a regular visitor for two years before making any attempt to adopt followers. He had come to the one house of the family which has a kinship relation with his own, a relation of whose great prestige the house's members are highly conscious. In appearance, manner, tone of voice, and display of religious know ledge he was exemplary. Gradually he met more and more of the family and acquired great understanding through careful observation of the individuals' conduct. He never claimed miraculous powers, invoking only the tradition of religious standing of his own family, which was celebrated throughout the region. By the time of this incident it was being said that our *sheikh* knew what you thought and felt; how you would not dare go before him in a state of ritual impurity, because he would send you away without a word. His little personal queries, backed by his long observation, were interpreted as evidence of personal insight into men's inner, secret selves. (I knew one or two individuals who kept away from him because they were engaged in illicit affairs they were sure he knew of, and so avoided facing his anger, nervously looking for any sign that he really did know.)

Indeed, it once happened that the man who featured as the unmasker and the *kazzab* in the incident with the Syrian was asked by the *sheikh* before they made the prayers whether he had made the ablutions or not. He had not, and at once attributed insight in secret things to the *sheikh.* This was the man who said to me after his performance to the unsuspecting Syrian that it was a blessing our *sheikh* had gone off to sleep, since he could never have behaved in that way in front of him. As it was, he was free to play on the shared knowledge of his own discreditable character and history and his capacity as a liar to expose the visitor as a "liar," without the visitor realizing that his authenticity had been denied. The cues, glances, long looks of apparent piety with only a hint of eye movement—and the massive collaboration by others in this piece of theater—went past the guest. The guest claimed knowledge, and therefore authority, but the signs he gave of it were discredited. The signs and meanings in themselves are socially part of a shared attitude toward the religious domain and the nature of human reality. The unmasker carried out his devaluing with reference to them, and presented himself, by means of a lie, as the defender of their authenticity against a "liar." The miracles were withheld.

To say miracles were withheld is to repeat that miracles, knowledge of the secret, and therefore authority depend by their nature on the judgments and attributions made by relevant others. Clearly this process may be relatively independent of the acts of the person being judged or of face-to-face situations in which that person

is participating, once initial interaction has established the socially valid nature of the person.[38] Our *sheikh*'s credit was built up through accounts of him, through interpretation of his conduct which drew on the socially accepted paradigm of what "real" *sheikhs* are and what defines them.[39] Men refer then to their own biographies, to the common stock of knowledge at hand about what *sheikhs* in essence are, and to conduct. Out of these three elements emerges a man's social significance. These attributions are made over time in social situations in which very often the person at issue is not present at all. Warrants and authentications are presented in individual accounts and in what men generally say. Authoritative sanctity, more perhaps than anything else in social life, is in the eye of the beholder.

Let us shift the emphasis in Goffman's (1962: 505) description of the cardinal social sin—"the sin of defining oneself in terms of a status while lacking the qualifications which an incumbent of that status is supposed to possess"—and say rather that others withhold the qualifications from one. Though the visitor presented all the outward typical signs of *sheikh*liness, he placed them in a context of challenge to our *sheikh* and explicit verbal claims to knowledge of the secret. Yet he provided no focus of interest which might incline people to accept his assertions and no reasons for such an acceptance. Without knowledge acquired over time of the particular social world, specific self-attributions have no interactional basis for validation (unless water is to be turned into wine, of course). It is not self-destruction and self-compromise that is at issue, so much as compromise by what might be termed others' interpretative manipulations of your behavior. The visitor made the common-enough mistake of assuming that the transmitter of messages and culturally endorsed signs is in control of their meaning, and forgetting that meaning is also given to messages in social life by others.

The stranger was thus led from claim to claim by our performer,[40] without realizing the way in which he was being defined by his audience. The point of the whole performance was to show that our secret, or shared knowledge of the performer's biography, which enabled us to interpret his elaborate piety as *kizb, was a secret* to one who should "know." The liar used the lie to uncover the "truth"; that is, to make an attribution of meaning to the visitor's behavior which was validated by our shared secret. Every typical mark of holiness became an additional mark of *kizb.* The liar became the instrument of truth and revealed/created the lie of the unwitting subject.

38. The validity may be established through a number of means: for instance, pasty history, a performance "to type," personality and character, or selection of an audience who may have an elective affinity for the call or message.

39. Even in our *sheikh*'s case there were some who were rivals of the house to which the *sheikh* regularly came, and some who were simply skeptical, who said of him that "the only reason he comes to our village is that here they kiss his hand and in his own they don't. There they know him."

40. The unmasker, for example, piously asked how he would get the *sheikh*'s aid when the latter left the village, and the *sheikh* replied that his follower should simply shout his (the *sheikh*'s) name from the hilltop and he would appear.

Conclusion

Lying in its various forms is clearly important in all societies, yet few detailed studies of lying practices and the social distribution of knowledge have been done.[41] There are many tantalizing hints as to what a study of lying in everyday interaction might reveal to the anthropologist. Gombrich notes that in a Sinhalese village the truth, exalted in theory as a major value, is in fact endlessly sabotaged by lying, which "is bound to be frequent in a culture much concerned with the preservation of status and dignity"; Burridge says that the relations between Kanakas and whites are characterized by both sides as relations of habitual lying and hypocrisy; Talal Asad offers the interesting observation that the Kababish of the Sudan represent themselves as "liars, thieves and deceivers," each man recognizing "that the only resistance his fellows can offer to the absolute power of their rulers consists in varying degrees of evasion."[42]

All these authors show lying as a generalized element within sets of social relations in which, in different ways and for different reasons, mutual knowledge and power or status are individually and structurally crucial.[43] In all these accounts, the main problem for actors is one of controlling certain kinds of information, and this also remains basic outside systems of domination and status containing separate social groupings of unequal rank and power. Robert Murphy has referred to the example of the Mehinacu Indians of Brazil, who are forced to live in close proximity to one another and have such an inordinate stock of knowledge of each other that achieving *non*relations is vital if social life is to persist. Such nonrelations are attained by scrambling the messages with an excess of information and by employing enormous skills in mendacity, thus producing a setting in which "nobody really knows . . . what is true and what is false; they are given ample doubts and few convictions." Lying is vital to the life of this society—indeed, lying *makes it possible.*[44]

This question of doubt leads us back to our case study. The importance of the ambiguity of native categories has been stressed by Leach in his work on Kachin social structure.[45] I would argue that the Lebanese example shows us the other side

41. The extent to which anthropologists themselves are caught up in patterns of concealment and secrecy, a rich field for research, is analyzed by Berreman (1972: xvii–lvii).

42. Gombrich 1971: 262–63; Burridge 1970: 37; Asad 1970: 242. None of these works centers on interaction patterns.

43. Cf. Bohannan (1957: 48–49), Keifer (1972: 101), and Gulliver (1963: 229). These authors are concerned with lying as an expected part of specific, highly formalized situations of legal dispute. They are not immediately concered with its patterns in other areas of social interaction. J.K. Campbell (1964: 279–83, 316) shows that in the highly competitive world of the Sarakatsani shepherds of Northern Greece, also characterized by an elaborated honor code, it is a virtue to lie to and cheat non-kin in the bitter fight for scarce resources.

44. Murphy 1972: 227–28. He refers to a thesis by Thomas Gregor of Cornell University, 1969.

45. Leach 1965: 106, "The ambiguity of native categories is absolutely fundamental to the operation of the Kachin social system . . . It is only because the meaning of his sundry structural categories is, for a Kachin, extremely elastic that he is able to interpret the

of the same sociological coin. Here, it seems to me, people have to deal with a normative social order regarded as primary in the sphere of politics, prestige, and rank—the status honor code. This code is distinguished by its public nature, relative simplicity, prescriptive-imperative character, and apparent precision of reference; if certain acts are performed, certain others should follow, and the line between honor and dishonor is absolute and clear, a kind of all-or-nothing proposition. But people actually live by secrecy and *kizb,* in complex situations, by tacit collaboration and flexibility, and by blurred definitions. They exist by *creating* ambiguities out of the unambiguous exigencies of status honor, the private out of the public, the invisible out of the visible. And they do so in ways that must at the same time appear to others to satisfy the demands of the normative code, all the while conscious that situations may arise which pose critical challenges of violence or shame.

In the setting of the village the ideology of honor, in terms of which prestige transactions are apparently conducted, gives rise to certain central ambiguities and contradictions—particularly so because it is an integral part of a historical context in which honor as a mark of group status ranking has been "oversanctified" as an instrument in the use and legitimation of power. So on the one hand honor is crucial to the status position of Beit Ahmad and each individual, while on the other it is only in fact by *kizb* that social life can go on at all and the group's fragile corporateness be preserved. Hence, for example, those who are most fearless in defining situations in terms of the code of challenge and response, and who should be the most prestigious, do most to threaten the common interests of the consociate group and are defined as *makhlu',* "asocial." The ideology itself produces *kizb* out of the tensions between it and the demands of the everyday world. Still, in this aspect, lying, along with the ambiguity which it reflects and produces, acts as a positive, "enabling" element in the everyday world. It makes the coexistence of code and social life possible.

If we relate ideology and social structure more concretely, however, *kizb* appears as an image and a source of alienation. For in the overall social setting the terms of exchange in which status is negotiated are changing. The lords have, over the years, bought up most of the independent landowners of Beit Ahmad. They have, at the same time. increased the local dependence of many of the staff by tying them to personal service and encouraging them to insist on the hierarchy of status honor. (They have also exacerbated peasant-staff relations by using Beit Ahmad where necessary against the *fellahin.)* Honor has become more and more a primary value and resource over which men transact, while it less and less reflects the realities of power and structural position. Its real economic and political base has been undercut, since the family has been progressively separated by the lords from the independent means of administration and autonomy.

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actuality of his social life as conforming to the formal pattern of the traditional, mythically defined, structural system." In usage, Arabic terms such as *beit* (house) and *'ailat* (family) are every bit as vague and flexible as Kachin categories of village and other groupings. In both societies the ideal structure is elaborate and rigid. I am stressing the importance of the *practices* through which ambiguity is produced, not only the conceptual-categorical elasticity.

This has entailed significant transformations in the social position of the family and its different segments, transformations that are masked by *kizb* as well as by the public performances of claim making and honor. The younger men are acutely aware that there is one major difference between their own and their fathers' generation. The cars, tractors, and harvesters that they drive and the guns that they carry belong to others, not to them. The young men are separated, in terms of the ethic of Beit Ahmad, from what gives them significance. The boasting, talk, bravado, and *kizb* are now, so to say, at one remove and on a secondhand basis. Men argue about the various qualities of' "their" cars, but the knowledge that they drive them for other people, that they are to be hired and fired, and that outside the village the boast of being from the family would be an insignificant claim, is a source of bitterness. The sense of everyday reality, the practice of the everyday social world, has become problematic in its relations to those values that give the social world and the self their meaning.

It is noticeable that the young men work mainly in family groups and in specific kinds of occupations. Twenty-three of them worked on the new airport runway in Beirut; five go to Syria in the summer to man a combine harvester and thresher; others travel to different areas of Lebanon in threes or fours. Wherever they go they go as members of Beit Ahmad, and only in very few cases does one take employment on his own. Furthermore, they work in a very particular kind of occupation: tractor driver, bulldozer driver, harvester driver, taxi driver, and so on. They do not go to Tripoli or Beirut to jobs in light industry or services or trades.[46] Now the notion of "work," as I have mentioned, is alien to the chevalier ethic of status honor. Work is a reality of the life situation of many of the family and they have become specialists in the semiskilled field of driving heavy vehicles. But in the village a man is not a driver, he is a "chauffeur." Indeed it does not seem to me fanciful to designate them "horsemen on tractors." The young men swing a tractor up the hill, roar past those sitting outside the shop, spin it three times on its axis (to the ruin of tires they can scarcely afford), and display their driving in much the same way as their fathers did their horsemanship. Horse and tractor alike are vehicles for display. It is driving style about which one boasts; it is the make and power of the tractor or lord's car that you drive (and the make of revolver that goes with it too) that you discuss with immense technical expertise. A "peasant" once told me that Beit Ahmad were "all mechanics," which is true. But among themselves they *are* "chauffeurs," as their fathers *are qabidiyat* (men of valor). Yet at the same time the complex contradictions between ethos and reality are ever present. One friend said sardonically to me: "Look, you saw what I was saying over there and all the showing off about the Buick and being a chauffeur? *Kizb,* my friend. What am I? I'm a taxi driver, that's what I am." *Kizb* bridges the gap between form and substance, ethos and the actualities of the political economy, but at the same time men directly experience and *know* that it is a false "solution" to the problem.

It is this complex situation which explains the elective affinity between this stratum and a view of the world (the world as constituted by men's actions, divorced

46. It might be noted, though I shall not discuss the matter in detail, that there are very few marriages with women from outside the family, and that endogamy here is not only ideology but actuality for Beit Ahmad.

from what is religiously right) as itself *kizb.* If we move beyond the narrower definition of the term "ideology" into the realm of religion and belief, "lying" emerges as a principle opposed to, and actively in the world opposing, the truth and the sacred. "Knowing" the interior, "real" world of the *batin* becomes the supreme mark of authority for the man of religion (the *mabruk* or blessed); but it also, in the profane dimension, is the mark of the dangerous, manipulative skills of the liar (the *mal'un* or cursed). The latter is dangerous precisely because the everyday life men live is a domain of lying, both theologically and in practice. Both *mal'un* and *mabruk* can see behind the veil of men's acts, and they present mirror images of each other.

Kizb thus is a vital theme in ideology and the code of honor, in social practice and social structure, and in the world view and belief system.[47] The last sphere in which it is also thematic is that of dramaturgy, situational interaction, and the creating/performing of a self. It can be argued that exactly because honor is increasingly separated from a base in political relations much behavior described as *kizb* takes on the appearance of a kind of game. Men play at and with lying, and it has its own generalized aesthetic and styles. It might seem, therefore, that nothing is "really" at stake, that it is "only" a game, and that statuses are not actually changed. For any given encounter or performance this may be quite true. But encounters and making claims are part of processes over time participated in by your consociates, not one-time events before different audiences. They become part of you, of your style, of what you *are.* The aesthetics of honor are crucial; ritualism and individualism go together.

The honor code forms what C. Wright Mills (1940) has called a "vocabulary of motives" with its own societal controls. Lying is important because it is part of the language by which men set up what they hope are socially authentic and legitimate grounds for conduct. The adequacy of their claims may at any time be tested, as we saw in the example of the Syrian *sheikh.* One has always to think in terms of the long perspective, of anticipated consequences for one's "name" and "place," for one's performance is expected to be relevant to future phases of social action. Games are deadly serious after all, and none more so than those concerning honor and the significance of the person in his social world. For the ultimate stake, when all the bravado, joking, talk, swagger, word play, and *kizb* are over, is your self.

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47. Max Weber (1958: 52) long ago pointed out the implications inherent in the utilitarian ethic which, like the ethic discussed here, has its own logic and breeds its own lies: "Honesty is useful, because it assures credit; so are punctuality, industry, frugality, and that is the reason they are virtues. A logical deduction from this would be that where, for instance, the appearance of honesty serves the same purpose, that would suffice . . ."

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